



From hypothetical scenario to tragic reality: A salutary lesson in risk communication and the Victorian 2009 bushfires

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Abstract:

OBJECTIVE: To investigate the ways that the risk of a bushfire emergency and communication strategies are perceived by different community segments. **METHODS:** A brief questionnaire preceded focus group discussion of a bushfire scenario with four communications from different sources. Groups were recruited to represent different community segments within a bushfire-prone peri-urban Shire in Victoria. **RESULTS:** Four groups (28 participants) were recruited. Bushfire experience was highest in the over 40-year-olds, who would use a variety of information sources, preferred to receive information from trusted local sources, such as emergency services and the council, and were more likely to be a member of a local organisation than the under 40s. Younger people used television, local papers, and friends, family and neighbours as information sources. Young parents felt disempowered through lack of local knowledge, and trusted government departments less than older residents. All wanted clear, current, specific local information about ground conditions and actions to be taken during a fire outbreak. **CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS:** Knowledge of and preparedness for bushfire is unequally spread throughout a bushfire community. There is a need in public health risk and emergency situations to focus on community development, information and consultation.

Source: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2010.00469.x>

Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Extreme Weather Event: Wildfires

Geographic Feature: ☒

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location: ☒

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Australasia

Health Impact: ☒

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Mitigation/Adaptation: ☒

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Resource Type: ☒

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion, Research Article, Research Article

Resilience: ☒

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified